# How to / Trackmania / User appearance / Avatars

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## Introduction

This what the game says about avatars in the manual:

**Your Avatar:**
This is the image that represents you..... You can import your own image into the game.

**Where to get an avatar for you:**

The Internet is full of it... just Google for words like "Avatars", "Smileys","Funny video clips" or whatever, you'll be presented thousands of websites with funny little pictures and animations...

**Be aware!**

You are responsible for the avatar you choose. This image will be transferred and be visible to other players. Don't use images that are shocking, offensive or protected by copyrights.

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## Part 1 : Authentication & Transfer

In order for others to see your avatar on their machine you will need to make sure of a few things. **Is your account authenticated?**

What does that mean? In a nut shell you need **purchase Trackmania United**. You then have a key and you are authenticated.

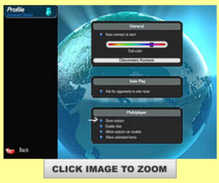
**Older keys are no longer accepted**. According to Xymph you can authenticate both United and Nations with the player key from your **Steam** install. It's in the Nadeo.ini file.

**Peer to Peer (P2P)**

communication in your game allows your machine to send a packet with your avatar in it to the other players connected to the same server as you. This can be set in the launcher under the Configure/Advanced/Peer ToPeer tab. Avatars are so small there is no need to make a locator unless you are on dialup and maybe not even then.

In the game there is also a setting under Profile/Advanced menu. Make sure the Show Avatars button is lit to see other people's avatars.

CLICK IMAGE TO ZOOM



CLICK IMAGE TO ZOOM

**Port forwarding:**
Port forwarding is necessary if a **router** is between your computer and the Internet. Basically it creates a "tunnel" from the web to the local IP address of your computer and the "ports" to which game is listening/using. This enables others to get skins, avatars, locators and other custom content from your machine. How to do this depends on your router and is beyond the scope of this Tutorial. I would suggest doing an internet search for "port forwarding (insert the name and model of your router here)".

On a side note, port forwarding is necessary if you are behind a router and want to **"Create" a server** with the game and have others be able to connect. While I'm not absolutely sure that port forwarding is necessary for avatars, anything else that requires a P2P connection does.

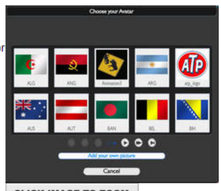
The ports that must be forwarded can be seen/edited in your TM launcher configuration as well (by default it's **Port 2350** (Server) and **3450** (Peer to Peer)).

## Part 2 : Ingame Avatar converter

→ First select an image and know where to find it on your computer.

→ Start the game and go to the **Profile menu**. Left click the Avatar that is in use (or your flag). Another menu will open with a list of avatars that come with the game. Click "**Add Your Own Picture**".

→ The "**Import image file**" utility will start. Select it from the location you saved it. Double click it or click "OPEN" after selecting it. Done.



CLICK IMAGE TO ZOOM

The import utility will convert a **JPG**, **DDS** or **TGA** image to a **DDS file** (DXT1a) and put it into:
C:\Documents and Settings\(Your Name)\My Documents\TrackMania\Skins\Avatars\

The final size of the imported file depends on the original image size but will be **below 50k**. If it was small (below 128 pixels either dimension) it will end up **128*128** pixels, and if it was large (over 256 pixels) it will be **256*256** pixels. The image need not be square but it will be made square.

### Why the Ingame converter is not the best tool to use

While high quality avatars can be made using the "Import image file" utility there are a couple of **problems** that can arise with using it that require processing the image before conversion.

For example look at this avatar When imported into the game it looks like this.

This is because the **import utility** treats "True Black" (#000000) in a picture as a **transparency mask**. This is really stupid, since file formats like TGA can store their own transparency information, not depending on any particular color... So interpreting "true black" as transparent is really senseless...

You could only avoid this by manually changing the #000000 in your picture to something like #010101 before giving it to the importer utility. That's a pretty long winded and annoying approach, so we'll prefer to do all our avatars by hand.

## Part 3 : Manual Avatar conversion

For best results, we'll always prepare & convert our images and animations by hand.

Find a nice image on the Internet, like the one on the right :)

Let's say that our original picture is 640*480 pixels in size.

Because Trackmania always displays **SQUARE** avatars, we *select a desired square area* on the pictures and **crop** it, so the picture is reduced to this content...

Now you can **resize** your picture to either **128*128** pixels or **256*256** pixels. Trackmania will accept both.

Of course you could save your picture now in a format that Trackmania accepts, but for quality reasons, I'd recommend you save your picture in .BMP (Wind*ws Bitmap) format for now.

Later on you can use specialised programs to get the best conversion/filesize ratio possible.

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